

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, Mt. 59405

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT of the stocking of yellow perch, bluegill and largemouth bass in Giant Springs Pond near Great Falls, Montana

PART 1. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

Project Title: Stocking yellow perch, bluegill, crappie and largemouth bass in Giant Springs Pond

Date: June 29, 2015

Project Location: Cascade County, Montana. T21N, R4E, S33.

Description of Project: The Department proposes to stock yellow perch, bluegill, crappie and largemouth bass in Giant Spring Fishing Pond to improve recreational opportunity in this urban fishing pond. Stocking perch, bluegill and crappie would provide a diverse fishing opportunity. Largemouth bass would be used primarily to control the size and abundance of the three other species if the need should arise. Largemouth bass would come from the Miles City State Fish Hatchery. The perch, bluegill and crappie would be transferred from wild sources pending disease screening and approval from the Montana Fish Health Committee and FWP Fisheries Division Administrator.

The pond is 0.37 surface acre and has a maximum depth of 6 feet. In 2002 the pond was dredged to provide better fish habitat. Water for the pond is provided by natural springs. The pond outlet is a screened adjustable standpipe. The pond contains white suckers, a small number of carp and fathead minnows. It is stocked weekly with 7 inch rainbow trout during summer months to provide recreational fishing. It was previously stocked with westslope cutthroat trout.

Alternatives to Proposed Action:

No action - This alternative would maintain the status quo of stocking rainbow trout only. Under this alternative no yellow perch, bluegill, crappie or bass would be stocked. The objectives of the project would not be met.

No other action alternatives, that have a reasonable chance of being implemented, were identified or analyzed.

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction: None

PART 2. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Provided
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		2.
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		3.
4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality				x		4.
5. Water quality, quantity and distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture				x		
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		
9. Historical and archaeological sites				X		
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				x		

Comments

(A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

2. Fish, including rainbow trout and westslope cutthroat trout have been stocked in previous years. Yellow perch, bluegill, crappie and bass would likely prey upon the suckers, carp and fathead minnows in the pond. No additional impacts to environmental resources are anticipated.

3. All 4 species proposed for stocking have been stocked in the Missouri River drainage. All four species are found during routine fish sampling in the Missouri River upstream of the pond. As such, the ecological impacts of these species have already been realized in the Missouri River drainage. All 4 species are easily controlled in the pond. It can be easily drained, or the fish removed by trapping, electrofishing or netting.

4. Public use of the site is controlled by providing hardened fishing platforms. No additional vegetation impacts are anticipated due to increased public use.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Provided
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat		X				2.
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity and distribution of community and personal income				X		
7. Access to and quality of recreational activities		X		X		7.
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution and density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services		X		X		10.
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

Comments

(A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided as comments.)

2. The desired outcome is to increase quality angling at Giant Springs Fishing Pond by stocking perch, bluegill and crappie. The proposal includes stocking largemouth bass to control the other species, but this species would also provide angling opportunity. Angling for all of these species would be beneficial to the public.

7. The desired outcome is to increase opportunity for quality public recreation through angling.

10. Stocking more species of fish may result in increased patrolling of the site by the local game warden. This increase in service would not be a burden to the existing FWP enforcement program. The site is located within a state park and is patrolled regularly by park rangers, game wardens and maintenance staff.

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur?

There would be no additional risks or adverse effects that would cause harm.

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant?

None of the risks identified are considered significant. Should any of these species escape from the pond, it is not likely there would be significant environmental impacts. All four species occur in the Missouri River system upstream of this site. Implementing the proposed action would not create water based hazards that are greater than most other reservoirs.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action when alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider. Include a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

The only other alternative considered was the No Action alternative. If this were adopted, status quo management of the site would continue.

No other action alternatives were considered.

EA prepared by: Grant Grisak

Date Completed: June 30, 2015

Public comment:

Public comment will be accepted from July 1, 2015 through July 15, 2015.

Comments should be mailed to;

Giant Springs Pond Fish Stocking comments
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, Mt. 59405
ggrisak@mt.gov



Figure 1. Photo overlooking Giant Springs Fishing Pond.



Figure 2. Map of Giant Springs Fishing Pond NW of FWP Region 4 Headquarters building.